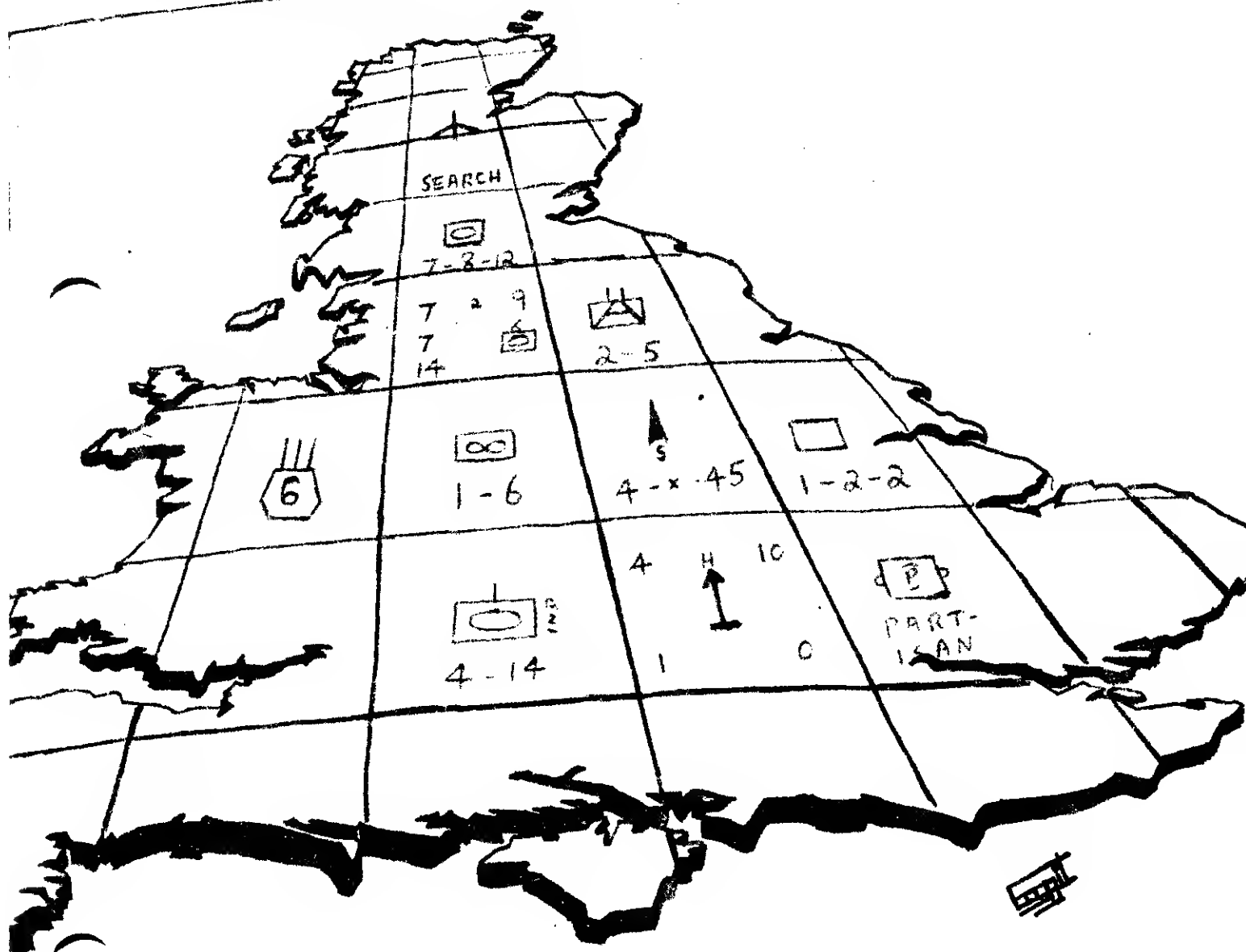


PLETION



ALBION is a magazine of nefarious purpose and dubious parentage, which pretends to be a source of information on board wargaming, Diplomacy and allied interests. Published on the first of each month at 10p per issue plus postage. ALBION has a sub-section called COURIER, published more frequently, which reports on the progress of postal Diplomacy games; this comes free to subscribers. Game waiting lists appear later this issue.

The editor, Don Turnbull, 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire, welcomes contributions in the form of letters or articles; the competition announced in issue 32, whereby you can win £5 for your article, is still open to all comers.

The editor, apathetic as usual, doesn't necessarily share the opinions of contributors as expressed in letters or articles; it's a long time since he made up his mind about anything.

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Again, the basis of the front cover was designed by Roger Emerson; I will doodle on it again (did I hear someone mention a competition?). I hope to ~~latter~~ cajole George Forster or Pam Palmer into doing the back cover. George says he wants me to publish a 'school-kids issue' so that he will be able to give real vent to his talent.....

Sssh! Porno EDITORIAL.

*"@@@*2&15(!:**@&'@&!!! Ah. That's better.

As usual at this stage, my mind is a complete blank. What better equipment do you need to write an editorial?

Something of a hodge-podge of information, this issue. Apart from the articles by Fred Davis and Michael Nethercot, the contents seem to lack cohesiveness, if you see what I mean. We have what amounts to a miscellany on miscellaneous subjects, guaranteed to drive the reader wild. Not that this is any different to the usual reader reaction. Nevertheless, I hope you enjoy it.

A few people won't be getting this issue, because they haven't adhered to the new financial rules laid down in the last ALBION. To these people - various rude noises. To the others who have stoutly rallied to fill the ALBION coffers and to square their accounts - thanks. I hope to keep a nice balance, in future, between the informality of the magazine itself and the rigid financial discipline I was forced to impose; hope this suits.

A few people have written to me saying that, to get the books right and me back in the super-tax bracket, I should raise the price of ALBION. This is a nice thought, in a way, and I confess it had crossed my mind a few times, particularly when looking at the rising prices of paper, stencils etc. However, at least for the moment, I will retain the current price. That's just to show you how Noble I am.....

I think I should give everyone a little warning at this stage, though. In the time available to me when I am not writing ALBION, I have been devoting my lack of prose talent to the inscribing of various application forms, asking people up and down the country to employ me and give me enough cash to allow me to live in the manner to which I have become accustomed. I.e. permanent bankruptcy. It is a fair comment on my talent as a writer that, to this date, I have had three refusals, an offer of a job which involved a rise in pay of 40p per week, and fifty-three total silences. However I continue to hope, and sooner or later someone will be silly enough to believe what I write on the application forms (about my five degrees, two PhDs, two small cigars and a bag of crisps). If such proves to be the case, then I could be packing my bags and general duties secretary and moving to the Wilds of Wick, the Fleishpots of Fowey, or any station in between. The frequency of ALBION publication may suffer during this transient period, and I thought I ought to warn you. If you don't get ALBION on or near the first of each month, then either you owe money or I am moving/am about to move/am trying to settle in. The same applies to my correspondence. I try to give priority to urgent letters; however non-urgent ones keep being shuffled to the bottom of the pile. If I don't reply promptly to your letters, therefore, it's not that I don't love you any more - just that the clock has only one pair of hands. I will always give top priority to COURIER games, by the way.

After all, the world must be a grotesque place if I can't find employment to suit my particular brand of idleness and stupidity. Anyone out there want to pay me £10,000 a year? Any legal, illegal, moral, immoral, fattening job will do. And I can guarantee complete disappointment.

See you all next time.
Don Turnbull.

*** For some time I have been pestering Fred Davis, the inventor of the Abstraction variant on the Diplomacy game, to allow me to print an article on the development of the game. Fred's article, following, may become part of a 'Diplomacy Special' issue of a new American magazine called TACTICS AND VARIANTS. T&V is planned to be something like S&T in format. However, at the time Fred wrote the article, it was uncertain when the first issue of T&V would come out, and although the article wended its way to me by sea mail, I still have no news on T&V or when it is likely to appear. Which is nice for ALBION, because I can print the article first djt ***

ON THE CREATION OF ABSTRACTION.

by Fred C. Davis Jr.

****Competition Category II****

The idea of revising the standard Diplomacy game came to me almost from the first time that I saw the board. As a student of geography, I found it hard to accept such concepts as the move "Norway - St. Petersburg" in one jump, or the idea of almost half of the board being occupied by just 7 Russian provinces, with some of these provinces, like Moscow, extending to infinity. I also disliked the exclusion of Ireland and Sicily, which were integral parts of the United Kingdom and Italy, respectively, from the passable areas; and the omission of the remainder of the south coast of the Mediterranean Sea and of the Turkish Empire from the map. I also discovered some small technical errors, such as the incorrect shape of The Ruhr; the Clyde-Liverpool border being too far north; and the country of Tunisia being misnamed "Tunis", which is the name of its capital city.

Further familiarity with the game after playing it led me to conclude that the two-coast problem was an unnecessary complication, which should be eliminated by re-designing the map so that no province had more than one sea coast. There is also an error in the chronology of the game. Although the first move is called "Spring, 1901" the map boundaries are those of 1913, and the game is supposed to take place during the World War I era. Under standard rules, 27 moves have to be made before reaching "Fall, 1914" and the actual starting point of World War I.

I also came to the conclusion that the Convoy rule was an anomaly, since it was not only unrealistic, but provided a method whereby armies could move over the seas at a much faster rate than the one-space-per-move allowed to all other units on all other spaces. Finally, solely on aesthetic grounds, I objected to the use of provincial names like "Livonia", which even educated persons are unlikely to have heard of, when there were more commonly known names available.

Changing any rules in Diplomacy is somewhat like the Domino theory. If you change one rule or revise the borders of one province, you usually find that you then have to change something else in order to preserve the equality of the 7 Great Powers in the game. If, in addition, you try to strengthen Austria and Italy, which are reported by some experienced Gamesmasters to be the weakest Powers, or to weaken England and Turkey, which are reported to have won a disproportionate share of victories because of their corner

positions, you have your work set out for you. Therefore, what started out as a few minor changes in standard Diplomacy gradually evolved into the variant now known as "Abstraction".

My first revision, published in DIPLOMANIA issue 22 in January, 1969, simply added one or two ordinary provinces to each of the six regular Great Powers, and three to Russia; plus adding Libya, Egypt, and Palestine (with the latter being the 6th province of Turkey), to complete the south coast of the Mediterranean. The most important change was the creation of "Archangel" out of St. Petersburg (north coast), which prevents the move "Norway - St. Petersburg" and eliminates a two-coast province. A special rule was added permitting Russia to build fleets in Archangel, so she could still reach the Barents Sea. The eastern areas of Moscow and Sevastopol were made into "Volga" and "Caucasus", respectively, creating a retreat space for any defending armies forced to retreat from the supply centres, and enabling an army to move around behind Moscow. At the eastern border of Archangel and Volga, a heavy line was drawn, indicating that the territory to the east was "Impassable". While no explanation was offered for this barrier, at least it did away with the concept of a land province extending to infinity.

In addition, Spain was divided in half, to eliminate the two-coast province. The Supply Centre was left in the southern half, which retained the name Spain. The other half was simply called "Northern Spain". North Africa was divided into "Morocco" and "Algeria", with the former becoming a Supply Centre. Both Egypt and Ireland also became Supply Centres, raising the total to 38, and the victory criterion to 20. I also created "Lapland" out of northern Norway, to create a further barrier between England and Russia. Bulgaria was considered too small to divide, and was left as the only two-coast province on the board.

The Austrian province Trieste was divided into a northern part, "Croatia", an ordinary province, and a southern part "Zara", a Supply Centre serving as the base for the Austrian Fleet. This was done to end the immediate clash which may otherwise occur between the Italian Army in Venice and the Austrian Fleet in Trieste. On the standard Diplomacy map, Italy and Austria are the only powers who begin the game with units directly confronting each other. By moving the Austrian Fleet down the coast to Zara, this initial clash is averted, and Austria and Italy can discuss possible courses of action rationally.

Other provinces were created just to bring each Great Power up to at least 7 provinces ("Midi" in France, "Swabia" in Germany, "Cicilia" in Turkey). At this stage I rather naively thought that this was sufficient to preserve equality. Already, however, I had an awareness that Austria was in a less favourable position than most of the other Powers, so "Transylvania" was created out of Budapest to give her 8 provinces and, theoretically, greater strength.

It was then recognised that the newly created passability of Ireland and Sicily would increase naval activity in those areas. Therefore, "Hebrides Sea" was added between the North Atlantic and the Norwegian Sea, to provide that Ireland would be touched by 3 bodies of water, and "Malta Sea" was created out of the western Ionian to provide similar lines of entry into Sicily. Also, the "Bay of Biscay" was created because it was realised that there was too much traffic in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean. I believed that a single fleet occupying the Mid-Atlantic should not be permitted to control the entire Atlantic coastline of France and Spain, as well as the Straits of Gibraltar.

Helpful comments were received on these suggestions from Don Miller. As a result of these comments and further thought, I realised that the creation of all these additional provinces, while improving the map, would require the creation of additional units; otherwise, the game would be out of balance.

The next step was the creation of the variant "Aberration I", in which each Great Power except Russia was to have 4 units and 8 provinces, with Russia to have the same 10 provinces already listed, and 5 units. This was discussed in lengthy correspondence with Rod Walker, who encouraged me to go ahead with my revision. He promised to run a test game in one of his 'zines when it was ready. With Rod's assistance, "Aberration I", the Davis-Walker variant, established the following new provinces and units in addition to those already listed above:

England: "Plymouth", a Supply Centre for a Fleet, created out of South Wales.
 France: "Midi" became "Lyon", a Supply Centre for an Army. 8th province, "Lorraine", created out of Burgandy. The unit in Marseilles became a Fleet, to balance Italy.
 Germany: "Dresden", a Supply Centre for an Army, created out of western Silesia.
 Austria: "Pecs", a Supply Centre for an Army, created out of southern Budapest.
 Italy: Sicily became a Supply Centre for a Fleet. Sardinia became passable, and was classified as the 8th province of Italy.
 Turkey: Syria renamed "Damascus", a Supply Centre for a Fleet.
 Russia: The already created special Supply Centre of Archangel became a regular Supply Centre, initially containing an Army.

Again, Austria had one more province than the other regular Great Powers, for a total of 9. This was felt necessary to compensate her for her inferior position. It was deemed unnecessary to give Turkey an 8th province, because of her strong corner position. Rod also pointed out that the creation of additional naval units required the creation of more sea spaces. Five new spaces, "Anglian Sea", "Riga Sea", "Calabrian Sea", "Cypriote Sea", and "South Atlantic Ocean" were added. Spain was redivided into 4 provinces instead of 2, and a new Supply Centre was added in "Andalucia".

"Aberration I" also saw the introduction of the revised convoy rule, which permitted an army to board a fleet and remain on board while the fleet was at sea. This new unit was called an "Army/Fleet" or "A/F" for short. It is easier to move an army by sea under these rules, since a player needs only a single fleet to do so. In order to permit this method to move armies at a faster speed than one province per move, the speed of all fleets was increased to two spaces per turn, except that entry into a land province always ended the fleet's move, and a fleet was not permitted to move from land to sea and back to land again on one move. While this double speed for fleets helped speed the moving of armies, it was found in practice to be a terrible headache for the Gamesmaster. Very complex rules were found to be required for the adjudication of fleet moves.

"Aberration I" introduced another significant change, a revised time scale; with the first move occurring in "July, 1914" instead of Spring 1901. Each subsequent move takes place in a single month. The build periods are in Sept., Dec., March and June. This makes the game time more properly that of World War I, and has the secondary advantage of shortening the length of time required for each unit's move to a more reasonable single month.

Another interesting change is the premise that if the victory criterion of 23 units is not achieved by the end of the Nov., 1918 move, plus any builds and removals for December, the game automatically ends, with the Power having the greatest number of units on the board being the winner. This provides a definite conclusion in the event of a stalemate, and may have some effect on stimulating diplomatic negotiations as a time limit begins to press down on the players. There are 36 moving periods between July, 1914, and Nov., 1918, inclusive. This is exactly the same number as there would be from Spring, 1901, to Fall, 1918.

Tunis was properly named "Tunisia". The Gulf of Lyon was given its correct name, "Gulf of Lions". Certain other minor border changes were made, such as moving the Belgian-French border further north to put Calais back into Picardy.

In a further improvement of place names, Ankara, which did not even exist in 1900 or 1914, was renamed "Sinope", which is the correct site of the Turkish Black Sea naval base. "Livonia" was renamed "Courland", which is the correct 19th and 20th century name for this area. Ukraina became "Ukraine". At Rod's insistence, Archangel became "Arkhangel'sk", although this goes against my idea of using Americanised spellings.

The progress of Game 1969-Gcc enabled Rod and I to see some of the "bugs" in the rules. The worst bug was the double speed move for fleets. Another was the continued difficulty of manoeuvring between Russia and Turkey. I also discovered that the wrong portion of the Mediterranean Sea had been called the Ionian Sea. Also, I became disenchanted with the rule requiring Switzerland to remain impassable, now that most of the board had been opened up.

The result was the creation of "Abstraction" to clear up the faults found in "Ab. I". For example, we have now added an area between Caucasus and Armenia, called "Persia", which permits "2 on 1" plays of Turkey on Russia or vice-versa. The Black Sea has been divided into eastern and western areas to provide more manoeuvring room. The "Ionian Sea" has been returned to its rightful place off the coast of Greece, eliminating the name Calabrian Sea from the map. The body of water erroneously called Ionian Sea in "Ab. I" is now named "Central Med." It is also now possible to move directly from Algeria to Libya, ending the Tunisian roadblock. And, to prevent Morocco from enjoying a secure corner position, armies are now permitted to cross from Andalucia to Morocco without need of convoy.

The last two-coast province has been eliminated by removing the south coast of Bulgaria and merging it with the northeast corner of Greece into a new province called "Macedonia". Finally, a new province, "Mesopotamia", was created between Armenia, Damascus, Palestine, and Persia, thereby giving Turkey an 8th province.

Abstraction has gone back to single-space fleet moves in its basic rules. There is an optional rule permitting double-space fleet moves, but I personally advise against anyone using it. An army rarely crosses more than two sea spaces in a convoy anyway, and the "A/F" can get across that distance in a single move. However, additional sea spaces have been provided out beyond the Atlantic spaces, to provide space for fleets or A/F's which have to retreat. There is also now plenty of manoeuvring room on the high seas.

Abstraction also provides optional rules permitting players to choose either armies or fleets for their initial units, and to negotiate with other players both as to the types to be used and their initial placement location. This

rule permits the units to be placed in any home province prior to the first move, except that fleets must be in provinces bordering on water. The initial placement period should be called "June, 1914." The use of this rule would make the opening moves of every game different.

****The optional initial location rule is not used in the Abstraction game currently running in COURIER. djt****

Rod and I came up with different solutions to making Switzerland passable. In my rules, the country is divided into an eastern section, called "Zurich", which is a Supply Centre, and a western section, called "Oberland", which is an ordinary province. There is an optional rule permitting Austria to begin the game with its Budapest army moved to Tyrol, from where it can take Zurich on its first move. This was done to strengthen Austria, which is at a disadvantage in being unable to get at any of the new Supply Centres in Iberia or Morocco. This special option, of course, is to be used only if the initial placement option is not employed.

There are several other optional rules in Abstraction, and the players will have to vote on which ones they want to use before starting play. Most of these options can be adopted separately, without regard to whether the other options are used. For coding purposes, it may be necessary for each postal game of Abstraction to have a different letter designation to indicate which of these options are used.

Thus, from a desire to simply reform some of the geographic anomalies on the standard Diplomacy board, there has arisen a whole family of variant games based on the "Aberration" and "Abstraction" series.

These changes were all made before I had the opportunity to read Dr. Allen Calhamer's article, "Mesh or Scale", in which he explains among other things his reasons for creating the standard board as it is. However, we must recognise that Abstraction is essentially a game of postal Diplomacy, and can therefore be more complex than an in-person game. Abstraction may be too complicated to be played across the table, but I believe that it makes a better postal game than the standard rules for the scholarly player, who wants a more accurate presentation of geography, history, and international politics.

Fred C. Davis Jr.

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"Changing the Diplomacy Map", by Fred Davis. DIPLOMANIA 22, January 1969. (Published by Don Millsr).

"Mesh or Scale and other related subjects in Diplomacy", by Dr. Allen B. Calhamer. BIG BROTHER 96, 18th July 1969. (Published by Charles Reinsel. Reprinted by Rod Walker in NUMENOR 3, 13th August 1970).

"Abstraction, a Diplomacy Variant", by Fred Davis. ALBION 11, January 26th 1970. Reprinted with slight amendments in ALBION 25, January 1st 1971. (Published by Don Turnbull).

**** I still have a few copies of ALBION 25 available, at the usual price of 10p plus postage. djt ****

THE DRAWING BOARD.

by Michael Nethercot.

One of an irregular series of articles which look with bloodshot eyes at the map gaming scene.

****COMPETITION CATEGORY IV****

About a hundred issues ago I threatened to write a series of short articles on the Red Army (1941-45). Fortunately for the readership of this magazine, I was left standing at the starting gate by S&T who have seen fit to publish a whole screed about this very subject.

This sort of thing is always happening to me. Witness my intention to publish a very good little Mini-Game by one Rene Nokin - the title, yes - FRANCE 1940. I dare them to do the same trick again. Note - must remember to chase Bob Stuart re his Operation Sealion. Rumour has it that certain other parties are sniffing at the idea.

I always turn to ALBION with a sigh of relief. It brightens my day and sends me off to work with my tail up and a merry sparkle in my eyes. At least it looks at the field of serious simulation gaming without plumbing the depths of pomposity and recognises that there are other things in life than D Elim or A Back 1.

Unfortunately the general approach to our particular little corner of the hobby world is one of insane addiction. Just read some of the Incoming Mail in S&T or the correspondence columns in The General. I am sure some of these people shed real tears when they lose a 'favourite playing piece' or are thwarted at Diplomacy. Having been the victim of Watson at the latter and of Chris Hancock every week for the last two years at face-to-face AH gaming, I speak with some authority. As the worst map gamer in the AHKS British Region I still enjoy watching my opponent winning every die roll. To put the record straight I must admit to having won at Tactical Game 14, simply by putting all my infantry on a hill top. The enemy force consisting almost exclusively of cavalry, I just sat tight and had a half hour's kip.

It is therefore with no authority at all that I would like to draw your attention to Strategy I.

Those of you who have seen fit to buy this little game will of course have played all the scenarios through and have learned all the rules backwards. As is my wont I always spend the last few minutes of each day reading in bed. For the last fortnight my sleep has been, to put it mildly, 'disturbed'. My wife, poor creature, who digests nothing more complex than Woman's Own, has threatened to depart the connubial bed. The reason for this sorry state of affairs is my wish to master the basic elements of the above-mentioned game. Being something of a peculiar individual I started at the beginning. Taking the first scenario as my guide I copied out the basic Modules into an old exercise book; at least this enabled me to avoid using Nuclear Weapons as well as Triremes.

I then glanced with jaundiced eye at the two expanses of map sheet. In the top corner I saw an island called ASGARDD and near it a peculiarly shaped country described as DRAMMIKOS. Talking to myself, I started to tell a little story about how Athermometer the Great forged the Asgardd confederation in 368 B.C. His father was, of course, Centwistopopulus, who died at the hands of the Etracian Hydrafoil. Anyhow, by dint of terror, rapine and pillage Atherm' siezed the neighbouring state of BJARNHEIM, crossed the

CHESSEX Sea in his fleet of Triremes, Pentameters and rubber dinghies to repeat the performance amongst the barbarian inhabitants of FANTICCA. In course of time the King of Drammikos, the worthy Unscroopulos, made pilgrimage to the sacred temple at KREUZ, wherein dwelt the supreme oracle.

The entrails of a dead duck were duly inspected and at last the oracle spoke. Without going into detail, I can report that the substance of the communication was to the effect that Drammikos had better return home post haste - his kingdom was in peril. Atherm' was on the move again.

So started the first Asgardd War.

Now, all I did was to tabulate a number of different Orders of Battle, each having the same total of combat factors, threw the die twice, noted the score, and gave number one to Atherm' and number five to Drammikos. Needless to say I listed six different Orbats. The units were then set up on the map sheet and all was ready for the off.

I decided to let the game last for a maximum of nine game months and set the conditions of victory at a very elementary level; the first side to capture an enemy town would be the winner.

I certainly won't describe the fantastic events that followed. No-one would credit the performance of the Athermometrian Hoplites, who fight with short bronze swords, and clad only in a thin metal skirt and a helmet adorned with peacock feathers. Or take the Battle of the Bjarnhem Narrows - here I learnt never to let one's fleets be caught beached and unprotected. Likewise the rules regarding supply and stacking, plus the combat system, may catch the unwary with his or her knickers in a twist.

By the end of turn seven the issue was more or less settled. The Asgardd fleet lay at the bottom of the sea, and as the naval experts will tell you, an island without a fleet is like a dog without a tail - only half an animal. Drammikos won, butchered all his male captives and !!!!!!! all the females.

This is the only way to get to grips with Strategy I. Creep up on it in easy stages - use your imagination - look on the light side. Don't take it too seriously. You can then relax and enjoy yourself. Of course solo play can be deadly dull, but it's the only way to deal with such a complex game as this, until you have at least got the hang of the basic structure.

As far as play-by-mail is concerned; it IS playable, given common sense and a realistic approach. Keep the bag of tricks as simple as possible. Don't try to use all the map sheet. Invent your own mini-scenario.

Good Luck!

Michael Nethercot.

** Michael's comment about players crying over dead units puts me in mind of a time I was talking about wargaming to a fellow teacher at school. He called me various names, and asked how I justified, in human terms, the death of men which elimination of game units implied. Incensed, I grabbed a convenient piece of paper, tore off a chunk, and drew on it an armour symbol, writing 'Panzer Lehr' on it. I then tore it into shreds in an ecstasy of destructive power, shouting 'Look at all the men I am killing', hoping to show him that a piece of cardboard was a piece of cardboard and not a civilisation. The whole thing was rendered null and void by the fact that, in my haste, I had torn off a page of a book precious to the

English Department, a Welsh (!) member of which was at my shoulder, regarding the proceedings with horror. The incident, and the message I was trying, in my clumsy fashion, to convey, were thus lost in a welter of abuse and Welsh words at whose meaning I could but hazard a vague guess.

Seriously, though - it is a problem, you know, to try to convince the lay public that we aren't just a bunch of warmongers who delight in bloodshed. And part of the trouble arises from the use of the very word 'war-gaming'. Though accurate, it is too emotive a word to describe our activities accurately. I like the way Michael Nethercot and others, aware of the problem, have started to talk about 'map-gaming'; the only trouble is that, when pressed to a fuller description, one is then forced to reveal the military slant of the hobby; the listener then says 'Oh, you mean wargaming - well, why the hell didn't you say so?'.

The term simulation is, I think, one of the best ways out of this dilemma, since it can then be fairly explained that the simulation is at an intellectual level, and can cover not only military conflict, but also economic 'war', political 'war' etc. Which is one reason why ALBION will continue the policy of devoting at least some space to games of a non-military variety, when material is available.

After all, chess is a wargame. Unrealistic, maybe. Highly abstract, certainly. But a game about war, for all that. What else does the capture of a piece stand for?

After which rambling, back to business.

djt **

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STRATEGY AND TACTICS - report on issue 28.

The magazine is published by Poultron Press, 34 East 23rd Street, New York City, New York 10010, U.S.A., and sells for a cover price of \$3.00. In fact the cover price doesn't mean all that much, since subscribers to the magazine pay considerably less than this. The Poultron Press UK Agency, 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire, deals with all UK orders, and can advise on prices etc.

The format is normal, and there are 40 pages plus inserts. Presentation is, as usual, excellent.

Taking the contents in **batting** order, we have:-

1. Outgoing Mail, the S&T Editorial. Mainly concerned this time with rating a whole series of games in popularity. Also deals with the future policy of Simulations Publications Inc. in regard their Test Series Games etc. Quite informative.
2. The Dark Ages - a military systems profile 500-1200. By Steve Patrick. A huge (15 page) article. I am no historian, so cannot rate the content. Interesting reading, and well presented.

3. Soviet and German weapons and tactics in the East, 1941-45. By Jim Dunnigan. Another long article (11 pages with diagrams). Very well written and presented, and tremendously informative. All the facts and figures are there (though of course I cannot vouch for their accuracy - Jim knows his job). The diagrams and charts are excellent.
4. Comparative Quantified Units. These were once called SUF (standard unit factor) counters. The CQs relating to Jim Dunnigan's article are presented here, presumably for the game designer.
5. Sackson on Games. Sid deals this time with two games of his own design, EXECUTIVE DECISIONS and SLEUTH. These are both non-war games, and look interesting if a little ordinary in subject-matter. Executive Decisions is a simple management game, while Sleuth is a game of deduction (of deducing, by various means, the identity of a missing card from a pack). This is more like the Sackson article we expect - not just a list of games, but a more penetrating look at a few games and a complete description of play. As a bonus, Sid adds a small competition based on Sleuth. However since British copies (except my own advance copy) come by surface mail, no British entries will be possible.
6. Game Review. On Luftwaffe. Yes, I know - they have done one before. In issue 26 the GAGE review gave the game something of a slating; this review praises it with some enthusiasm. Why another review, and why the change of heart? Well, apparently there was some mix-up with Avalon Hill concerning the rules of the game reviewed in issue 26. Perhaps there are other reasons, though.....
7. Pass in Review. The S&T book column. Concerned with books about the 'lodgement' of American forces upon the continent of Europe in 1944. Just a list of 40 or so books, with brief comments.

And that's it! The rest of the magazine is taken up with advertisements. Except that, as usual, there is a game with the magazine, the map-sheet and unit counters arriving as enclosures. And the rules, of course.

The game this time is Lost Battles (Tactical Game 103) which deals with Russia 1942-44. This is, of course, the same period as Barbarossa (S&T), Stalingrad III (S&T), Stalingrad (AH) and PanzerBlitz (AH). So why yet another game on the Russian front? Well, this is at regiment-battalion level, and thus represents the middle course between the strategic games and the tactical PanzerBlitz. The game will, we hope, be reviewed in ALBION at a later date. However, initial reactions are favourable. There are some very interesting artillery rules which are novel, and a most intriguing rule concerning road travel, which forces a unit travelling along a road to occupy, effectively, more than one square, thus simulating a convoy situation. There are four scenarios, each dealing with different types of action. All in all, despite the fact that this appears on the surface to be 'just another game on the Russian front', it looks an interesting game with some novel features and nice clean design.

Overall comment on S&T 28.

I am in a doubly difficult position here. First, I must decide exactly what it is I am reviewing. The inside cover of the magazine says that it is a 'magazine of conflict simulation'. However the bulk of the reading matter is purely historical in nature. Therefore, if we are to look at this issue from the standpoint of the reader interested in military history, it must be rated highly, since it is most informative and contains a considerable accumulation of facts.

From the gamer's point of view, however, there is very little on 'conflict simulation' in this issue, and nothing in the way of strategy and tactics beyond historical facts.

I think the gamer who has only a marginal interest in military history will be disappointed with this issue. On a page count, he would probably look at it something like this:-

Military history etc.	27 pages.
Information etc.	2 pages.
Advertisements	4 pages.
Games	3 pages.
Front cover, feedback	2 pages.
Books	2 pages
Total (fractions rounded off)	40 pages.

Not much for the player, then, though quite a lot for the designer and an abundance for the student of military history.

My other difficulty is to decide which hat I am wearing. As most readers know, I am the S&T agent in England and the UK, and the sales of magazine subscriptions mean to me the ~~consolation of the fact that I am~~ sheer satisfaction of knowing the Service I am giving to the Community. In these pages, however, I must remain with the ALBION hat firmly on my head, and throw the agency hat into the corner for a while. With this in mind, I come to the

Recommendation.

For the gamer (and these represent the vast majority of the readership of ALBION) this issue of S&T is poor. The game may be good, and this will help to compensate. However the magazine itself is a disappointment.

For the potential game designer, the issue contains a fair amount of useful information.

For the student of military history, there is plenty of meat here.

Don Turnbull.

* * * * *

A Miscellany of Information on Games, Magazines etc.

This is a new feature which I hope will become regular. It will contain just tit-bits of information on matters of some interest to the 'simulation gamer', which can be supplied by readers, if they like to send me details, as well as by myself. djt

THE LATEST Avalon Hill game, Origins of World War II, is soon to be available. This is a political game, dealing with international politics in a manner familiar to both AH gamers and Diplomacy players. It is basically a five-player game, with versions for two, three or four players. It sells for \$8.98. Which probably means about £5.50 in the UK.

TWO NEW Test Series Games, from Simulations Publications; are Phalanx and Dark Ages. They continue the series started by TAC3, TAC14 and TAC13. They resemble TAC14 more than TAC3, obviously. Price \$5.00 each. They should be available via the UK agency soon.

WAR IN THE EAST is another new and huger-than-life game on the Russian campaign soon to be available from Simulations Publications Inc. (S&T to you). This used to be called Stalingrad II, and features four full-size boards, thousands of unit counters, and more potential battle-weariness for players than any other game. The price (as yet unknown) is likely to be on the same scale.

STREET FIGHTING will feature prominently in the game CLERVAUX, currently 'in design' by Jack Kramer (who designed GRUNT). Publication date uncertain.

ISSUE 29 of Strategy and Tactics will contain the game THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC. Makes a nice change from games on the Russian front, if nothing else.

RUMOUR HAS IT that Lord Longf*rd and Mary Whiteho*se were recently seen, naked, indulging in an orgy of the most extreme nature in Trafalgar Square fountains. Nothing to do with games (or perhaps it has, come to think of it); but thought you would like to know.

ON LES AURA is a new Diplomacy magazine published by Michel Liesnard in Belgium. This magazine will report on the Youngstown Variant.

ZONES OF CONTROL in Avalon Hill games. For a while there has been some misunderstanding about the rule governing moving from one zone of control to another; main source of confusion has been the way AH have written the rule in various rule-books. I have confirmation that the true situation is as follows:- a unit can move from the zone of control of unit A directly into the zone of control of unit B provided that doesn't involve also staying in the zone of control of unit A. Thus, AH zones of control would be listed by S&T as 'fluid' (see the Strategy I rules, module 9), though there are, of course, no movement penalties in AH games.

This has been confirmed by Omar DeWitt. There isn't a better authority, since he handles all the AH rule interpretations.

CONFERENCE MAPS for the game Diplomacy, though supplied with American versions of the game, aren't supplied with copies bought in England. Pity; I think, however, it would be an easy task to make some available - anyone interested?

A FEW COPIES of the game Battle of Britain are apparently still available, from Simulations Publications Inc., 34 East 23rd Street, New York 10010. No - the Poultron Press UK agency doesn't handle them. The cost is \$7.00 plus postage. Hint - since international money orders are sent by the post office, not by the purchaser, you should ensure you state, on the money order, your name, address, and the item you are paying for. No idea how many they have, but I guess the copies number dozens, rather than hundreds. The game is mechanically a bit clumsy, and is quite complex. But there isn't another game like it.

EARLY ISSUES of Strategy and Tactics are to be made available bound in lots of five, with a newly-written introduction. No idea when or how much, but avid collectors should watch this space.

LETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLETTERSLET

*** Quite a lot in the letter column this time. Also, a number of letters overlap on subject matter. So I have split the column into a number of sections, to try to make it more cohesive. Hope this is OK by those who have written. djt ***

1. Future Format of ALBION.

(Martin Leathwood). By all means expand but please try to keep it friendly and remember that most people buying the magazine (I believe) are interested in war gaming first and foremost.

(Charles Appleby). In my opinion selling ALBION over the counter would kill its personality completely. ALBION in its present form is ideal for board wargamers for two reasons:

1. They can freely express their own ideas and learn about other people's.
2. Game reviews are honest and are of real assistance in choosing purchases.

(John Piggott). Your print run seems to be rising a little each issue or three, and if it continues to rise (and I can't see why it shouldn't) you'll eventually find that the bulk of your labour will consist of duplicating and collating. There may well be a potential readership of over 1000 people for ALBION, and if you ever reach even half that number, apart from the sheer physical drudgery of running off 15,000 or 20,000 sheets of paper every month, you'll find yourself spending more and more time tending the subscriptions etc. - pure office work which will give you no feeling of having achieved anything.

Another thing to consider is that, as your readership grows, you'll get more and more people to write things for you, and you'll either have to expand the magazine (more drudge) or else limit its scope more and more. In the parallel world of science fiction fandom, there have been any number of magazines which have been forced to fold because they've grown too big for their editors.

*** My thanks, folks - not only for the implicit praise (I can accept any amount of that....) but for the sound advice. John has voiced many of my secret fears concerning expansion - already the job of putting all the copies together (and this issue will run 150 copies) is starting to weary my wife, and sooner or later I will have to give her a hand. Seriously, though, it is a helluva job, and the idea of doubling the number of copies sends shivers down my spine. So - the idea will be mulled over, with the above advice (and from other sources) in mind. Don't expect radical changes; I will try to keep the format in line with your requirements. After all, it's you who are paying for my beer. djt ***

Not Strictly a letter, but a grand comic quote from War Bulletin, edited by Hartley Patterson:-

ALBION 32 publishes its accounts, something I've never known any other editor to do. An honest fellow, this Turnbull. Poor, but honest.

*** Hartley - you have hit that nail right on the djt ***

2. Diplomacy Drop-out Players.

- (John Piggott). If two moves in a row are missed, I think there's a good case for declaring anarchy in that player's country. Then his units would be eliminated where otherwise they would merely retreat. This is of course the system used in WAR BULLETIN at present, and having played under it I can vouch for its workability. However, I much prefer to win a game by playing better than the other players rather than by just being the last player to get fed up and drop out.
- (Graham Jeffery). If after two moves a player has made no attempt to make contact with the gamesmaster, then on the third move the rulebook rule for players conceding come into action. The other players should be made aware of a player dropping out and once the rule comes into operation the player in question may not rejoin the game. Of course, if the player informs the gamesmaster of his conceding (as every player should) then the rule comes into operation immediately.
- (Dennis Nixon). I should prefer to see you continue your present practice of ordering a drop-out player's units to stand without support (unless perhaps from another player). A drop-out tends to spoil the game by giving his nearest neighbour(s) some easy territory. If his units were to be subject to annihilation by a single attack the lucky player(s) would have even more advantage.

*** Though John and Graham have a strong point, there are two reasons why I prefer to retain the present policy. First, Dennis' point about 'lucky' close neighbours. Also, from my selfish point of view, it makes life a bit easier for the gamesmaster if the usual rules are obeyed whether orders have been received or not. Not perhaps the rule-book solution, but then the rules were designed for face-to-face play, where it is clear when a player has decamped in search of beer and beauty. So, unless there are serious objections, I would like to stick to the current policy. Thanks for your views. djt ***

3. Payment for ALBION articles.

- (Martin Leathwood). I personally don't think that you need to pay people to write in a hobby magazine such as ALBION. Wargamers' Newsletter has prospered, apparently, for over 100 issues without paying anyone and is to my mind a far better magazine than Miniature Warfare, with its over-serious professional approach.
- (John Piggott). I don't really see why you should pay readers for articles. ALBION is not, nor does it make any pretensions to being, a professional journal, and I should have thought that it would be reward enough for a contributor to have his article in print, without any money being necessary or expected. ALBION (and wargaming in general) is, after all, only a hobby. Your readers seem a fairly vocal bunch, and surely

the point of writing an article on some aspect or other of war-gaming is to see what other people think of your ideas. ALBION is a magazine which can achieve these aims.

*** Sigh of relief! I can't afford to pay anyway. However the competition, announced last issue, still stands, in the hope I can get the prize money together by next July. I hope this will provide the right sort of compromise. djt ***

4. Miscellaneous comments, questions etc.

(Chris Harvey). How about an article from some brilliant 'do-it-yourself' addict on how to make some type of box to keep unit counters in? With so many games around now, this really is a problem to me. For my Strategy I counters I use a shirt box divided into paper compartments. This isn't very professional, but better than cumbersome plastic bags. For that matter, just how does one 'mount the mapboard'? I always get pockets of air in my boards.

*** In the old days, I used to buy fishing fly boxes, which come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Shop-keepers, at one time, didn't realise the value of these things, when they had sold all the flies contained therein. Now, however, they have caught on, and a good box might cost up to 60p or so. By far the best (and by far the most expensive) counter container is made by Bisley, a firm which manufactures office equipment; it has 20 drawers, 15"x8"x1", each drawer containing 35 compartments, about 1½" square. I have all the S&T games, most of the AH games, and one or two others besides, and all my unit counters fit into this thing easily. One snag, though - it cost over £20

Equipment required for mounting boards consists first of a willing helper, quite a lot of wallpaper adhesive, and patience. Spread the adhesive liberally (without lumps) on both map and board, and let it dry a bit before putting them in contact. Work out from the centre, just like hanging wallpaper, and don't worry if you get lumps - these are paste, not air, providing you have put enough paste on, and they will disappear when the paste dries. Be more careful of the thin paper maps (France 1940, for instance) since they stretch when wet.

A do-it-yourself counter container would make the subject of a useful article. Anyone? Personally, I find it difficult to do anything myself. And Malcolm Watson was recently seen emerging furtively from a shop carrying a 'Do-It-Yourself Englishman Kit'. djt ***

(Henry Radice). Passing through London recently I saw Diplomacy in the window of Fortnum and Mason. It has thus reached U status!

*** Wonder what the price was..... djt ***

(W.G.Corker). Would you happen to know whether Avalon Hill have an agent in Britain or not? I am interested in subscribing to The General, but the only address I have is in America.

*** Afraid not. A few places stock AH games, of course, as listed in a previous ALBION. But the General can only be obtained direct from AH at Harford Road, Baltimore. djt ***

(Martin Leathwood). How about an article for newcomers like myself about postal gaming etc? I understand the grid system but don't know how you avoid the dice - surely not with independent umpires? Also the means to find postal opponents.

*** The trouble with being an amateur at this game is that you go on blithely printing new articles and new information, assuming everyone knows what you are talking about. Clearly I have been rather remiss in the aspect Martin mentions; amends are made later in this issue (or, if space runs out, in the next) in an article on postal wargaming, ways and means. Thanks, Martin, for giving me the necessary nudge. djt ***

* * * * *

PanzerBlitz Corner.

Number 2 - by various contributors.

*** Apart from some rule clarifications, comments below refer to the 'hide and seek' aspect of some game situations, units dodging from one woods hex to another, safe from fire because of the spotting rule. djt ***

From Derek Fisher.

I find that the hide and seek is slightly less if it is assumed that, when a unit fires from a wood it is spotted, and can be fired on while it remains in the same woods hex. Can it be that there are those among us who are merrily banging away from a woods hex and insisting that fire cannot be returned until a spotting unit barges into them?

I like the division of attack factor idea, and in face-to-face play one could probably come up with a reasonable hidden movement rule - giving the attacker a choice of hexes to fire at.

Without getting out the rules, I don't think there is any reason why, if you should be so inclined, to fire at all the woods hexes that are hiding a given unit..... if you want to shoot up trees - whatever turns you on!

*** The next suggestion I have read somewhere, but can't remember where. I am pretty sure of the source, however. I hope the author will forgive me if I have guessed wrong. djt ***

From Tom Oleson.

Tom has suggested that if a unit which ends its movement turn in a woods hex has been in 'sight' of an enemy unit, capable of firing on it, for longer than a certain period of time, then the enemy unit can fire on it; I don't think the suggestion involves firing on the unit actually in the woods hex, rather firing at it during the opposing player's movement phase. Of course, this is contrary to the rules, but then the whole question is concerned with a possible drawback in those rules.

*** Any other suggestions about the spotting rule? djt ***

From Hartley Patterson.

Perhaps you should mention the S&T notes on unit stacking in/on a fort. It is made clear that units in forts are counted for stacking purposes separately from those outside the fort. In effect, the fort constitutes an extra hex.

In using CAT, can the infantry arrive on transport, unload, and then assault all in the same move? To be able to 'rush' enemy units in a defensive position and overwhelm them before they could fire a shot would be an enormous advantage, but I don't think this was intended.

Can CP units, in the indirect fire optional rule spot while being transported? Or do they have to be unloaded first?

The ALBION correction requiring CP units to be able to 'see' spotting units before they can direct fire from an SPA etc is wrong, as the rules make clear that the spotting units are using flares or radio. Unless of course the unit under attack is out of sight of the CP.

*** Yes, the fort rules have been cleared up, and I should have confirmed the fact that the fort really constitutes an extra hex.

The CAT infantry arriving on trucks was a bone of contention in the early days. There are, of course, arguments either way. However the rules make it quite clear that a unit which has just unloaded cannot use its attack factor in the same turn; since this can only refer to CATting infantry (anything else would already have used its attack factor before the movement phase), then it is clear that driving up in a truck, offloading, and killing everyone in sight without the defenders having the chance to fight back is all wrong. Infantry, in order to CAT, must start the turn either adjacent to, or one hex away from, the unit they are CATting. This isn't an 'ALBION interpretation' - it's in the rules.

I haven't come across the one about transported CP units directing fire before, nor is there an official AH ruling on it, as far as I am aware. Marginally, I would be inclined to say 'no' but am open to persuasion. Any comments?

There is some confusion about the indirect fire rule. The rulebook itself says that the CP unit must be able to 'see' the target, but says nothing about 'seeing' the spotting unit. Omar DeWitt, who in addition to being the AHIKS Judge is also the AH 'rules man' (i.e. he answers the questions on rules sent to AH) has recently published as an AHIKS ruling the fact that CP units must be able to 'see' the spotting unit. Personally I think AH got this wrong in the first place; if the spotting unit is using radio, there's no need at all for the CP unit to have to see the target. If using flares, then of course there's a case for the CP unit having to see both target and spotter. I'm going to sit on the fence on this one and invite comment, in my usual irritating way. djt ***

An ALBIONesque Gripe.

It has been reported to me by various sources that certain strange interpretations of the PanzerBlitz rules are being circulated, and that these interpretations have been made 'despite the stuff in ALBION, which tries to change the rules'. Now let's have a few things clear. I will come to the actual interpretations later, but just bear with me awhile for a spot of smouldering.

There are two types of 'rule interpretations' in ALBION. And there is a third category concerning rules, which could be called suggestions. The first type is the quotation of an actual rule, either explicit or implicit in the rule book of the game concerned, and there can be no arguments about that. The second type is the interpretation which has been made, authoritatively, after consultation with the designer himself or the person whose decision on the rules is based on consultation with the designer (in the case of AH games, the latter person is Omar DeWitt). ALBION itself makes no pretence at original rule interpretations, although it does make a few suggestions from time to time.

Suggestions - such as those above for improving the spotting rule - are just what they say they are - suggestions, and they should not be quoted as rule interpretations. If two players involved in a game decide to use a suggested ruling, that's up to them, and I'm glad that ALBION is able to disseminate various opinions and points of view. However a clear distinction must be made between 'interpretations' and 'suggestions'. In most cases it is made abundantly clear into which category a particular case falls. For instance, in Derek Fisher's comments above, we have a suggestion which players might like to try. But it isn't an interpretation, as Derek would be the first to confirm, and ALBION isn't trying to change anything.

My personal policy, as well as the policy of ALBION, has always been to enjoy, and to promote the enjoyment of, playing games. You can't enjoy a game if you are forever bickering about rules; in a face-to-face game, players can usually reach an amicable agreement quickly, but in a postal game argument, by letter, can go on interminably, and this completely ruins the game. Also, it has always struck me as common sense that one should normally expect to play a game according to the printed rules. Even when those rules are clearly out of joint (see a comment later in this issue on Barbarossa). If two players agree to make up their own rules for a game, fair enough, but they must expect to play the normal game rules unless there has been a private agreement. This applies particularly in the case of postal games.

Stalingrad is a case in point. For years players have been trying to give the Germans an easier time of it in the game, and one of the suggestions has been to reduce the Russian replacement rate. Fair enough - perhaps it's worth a try, and in fact ANIKS players usually do this. But the actual rule still says that the rate is 4-6-8, and this is the rule that should be played - tacitly - unless players agree to the amendment. I'm all for experimentation, since that's the way new games and new concepts develop. But, particularly in a postal games community, it is essential that a common and universal standard is adopted, subject to individual amendment if thought necessary.

I am more than willing, therefore, that ALBION should act as a forum for rule discussions, interpretations and suggestions. But to cite ALBION as 'trying to change the rules' is to my mind a bit unfair.

Just to clarify a few of the wrong interpretations that have been circulating; and these are not suggestions - they are in the rules.

1. Infantry may not unload from transport and CAT in the same turn. The attack factor of a unit cannot be used in the turn in which it unloads.
2. A unit which is dispersed is effectively out of action for the owner's next turn, and comes face up again at the end of that turn. Some strange interpretation has it that the unit is out of action for two turns, but this is not true - see Game Procedure Step 6.

3. A unit cannot move and spot in the same turn; obviously, since firing takes place before movement. However if a unit is in a spotting position at the start of a turn, it can move after the firing phase. The rules say nothing which forces the spotting unit to remain in place for the turn during which fire is directed at the target, only that it should be in a spotting position when firing takes place (i.e. before movement).

Finally, one ruling which is debatable. Over-running can only take place, according to the rules, when the target unit is on clear terrain. However there is a good argument for allowing an over-run to take place against a target on a hilltop square which in all other respects is clear terrain. This is particularly true for the area around Bednost on board 2. I think this was intended; I know that Omar has made this interpretation for AHIKS games. But the rules don't allow it, if one takes them literally, and this is therefore a suggestion, not an interpretation.

I hope this clears the air a bit. Remember - gaming is for fun; many games have debatable points in the rules, and players should come to agreement on the handling of such points before starting the game, in particular when the game is played by mail.

* * * * *

A Miscellany on Games.
by various contributors.

1. BARBAROSSA.

(From Chris Hall). The rules state that the Russians may put a supply unit, plus one or more fighting units, on a city hex, and these are only removed when the German rolls a D elim. What happens when the Russian has two assault armies plus a supply unit in a city? The total Russian defence factor is 40, and it is impossible for the Germans to get a 3-1 attack on the city; 3-1 is the smallest odds at which a D elim is possible. Thus the Russian can never lose the game if he adopts this tactic.

*** Quite right, Chris. This is perhaps a fault of the rules, or perhaps an accurate re-creation. Whatever the reason, the rule exists, and the conclusions are true. Players could decide to make a ruling between themselves which gets round this if they wish, perhaps by negating the doubling power of the city hex when the defending units are isolated. We did comment on the rule in the original review of the game. djt ***

2. FRANCE 1940.

(From Dave Taylor). The game seems slightly biased towards the Germans - even if they cannot stage a break-out they can usually destroy enough Entente formations to make sure of sinning. I'm not too happy with the allocation of victory points - surely the destruction of a 7-8 armour unit should be worth more points than that of a 1-8? Perhaps victory points should be based on the unit's points value? A similar system exists in 1914. I suspect that, once the use of air units becomes as familiar as that of ground units, the German air units will be very powerful pieces. As yet I have not played enough games to determine the best way to handle air units.

*** I had planned a review of this game for this issue, but things went aghay. Hopefully, next time. Thanks for the comments. djt ***